The Scranton Tribune

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SCRANTON, MAY 23, 1899.

Thomas A. Dunn's proposition to keep all the asphalt streets of Scranton in good repair for ten years at the rate of $11,000 a year was not advanced until the city had executed a contract with another company at a higher price. Mr. Dunn should have put in his $11,000 bid at the time when bids were called for. It is very easy to be brave after the battle is over.

The Sunday Problem.

The general assembly of the Presbyterian church has in unequivocal language re-affirmed its historical and traditional position with respect to Sunday observance. "We deprecate," it says, "the secularizing of the Sabbath day by any form of business or traveling in the interest of business, by any and all pleasure excursions, by all social functions, and by whatever way the use of the day is diverted from its sacred character for rest and divine worship." It is very possible that persons not identified with American Presbyterianism or, in fact, with any church deprecate this secularization, but deprecating it won't stop it and the practical question is, "What is to be done?"

Looking at facts simply as facts, without considering the right or wrong, it will have to be admitted by every honest student of the Sunday problem that Sunday observance carried to the point of a complete cessation of all Sunday activities outside of the church service and the home is no longer acceptable to a majority of the American people. The majority may be wrong in this and the minority right, in which event it is the minority's duty to hold out firmly in the hope of converting enough of the latitudinarians to constitute itself into a majority, with power to enact its will into statute law. But right or wrong, the majority now sanctions by its conduct and by its beliefs the turning of Sunday into a day not simply of worship and penance, but of worship combined with recreation, enjoyment and innocent pleasure. We do not believe that a majority of the American people have become bad at heart and therefore ready to indorse rowdyism or dissipation on Sunday; but their average sentiment has obviously drifted away from Puritanical moorings and it is doubtful if in the present generation it can be coaxed or coerced back again.

What then? Obviously the thing to do for those churchmen who can do so conscientiously is to accept the new conditions and proceed to make the best of them. If Sunday travel cannot be stopped, see that it is not abused. If people will exchange visits or go to parks and places of amusement on Sunday, try to keep vicious and degrading influences away from the day's observance and cultivate a public sentiment accordingly. If Sunday newspapers have come to stay, put the seal of approval on the decent kind and fight the indecent kind relentlessly. In other words, adapt moral teachings to the changing social conditions of the times; and while taking care not to sacrifice vital principles, save the church's influence by keeping in touch with the people. This would appear from a layman's standpoint to be the common sense view of the matter.

The Saturday evening fake story regarding the death of ex-Empress Eugenie was of course denied in despatches the following day. While the metropolitan papers gave the yarn as a rumor for what it was worth, it is noticed that the Scranton Sunday papers published it for a fact. The system of faking news was adopted during the Spanish-American war by certain Scranton Sunday sheets and they appear to have been unable to cure the habit which has caused almost everything in the line of news in their columns to be regarded with suspicion.

Russell A. Alger.

The published correspondence between Secretary Alger and Senator McMillan, of Michigan, in which the former asks the latter if he intends to be a candidate for re-election and receives a frank reply in the affirmative, is supplemented by an interview in which the secretary of war practically admits that he is a candidate for Mr. McMillan's seat and incidentally makes mention of the fact that three years ago, when McMillan was absent, he (Alger) headed the Michigan delegation to the St. Louis convention and gave loyal support to the presidential candidacy of William McKinley. This indirect appeal to McKinley men for their support, coming from a member of the president's own cabinet, might be construed as indicative of administration interference, but it is improbable that the president will take any hand in this contest, which is peculiarly local to the people of Michigan, or permit the exploitation of his secretary of war as in any undue sense a distinctively administration candidate. A man of finer sense of propriety than General Alger possesses would not thus throw embarrassment around the president or use the high office of cabinet minister as a step ladder to another office of longer tenure.

This inability to look at things from an impersonal standpoint seems to be the great defect in General Alger's character. He is a genial and generous man; he is peculiarly steadfast in his likes and dislikes and among those who find favor in his eyes he is the personification of liberality and devotion. But notwithstanding these admirable qualities there is that in his disposition which responds readily to irritation or annoyance; a peppery quality which instantly resolves any official difference of opinion or judgment into a personal matter, to be treated as a sign of unfriendly intent or as a challenge to battle. Some day, when the prejudices growing out of the peculiar management of the war department during the early portion of the war with Spain shall have subsided, it will form an interesting subject of inquiry to ascertain, if possible, the causes of the sudden development of Secretary Alger's unpopularity. We have already a theory on this subject which may or may not be vindicated by time. Our explanation for most of the general public's dislike of Alger is the small and petulant spirit of retaliation indicated in the secretary's reply to the now famous Roosevelt round robin. The public, we think, took at that time the view that a man who would in a fit of pique violate the confidential nature of a private correspondent in order to strike at a subordinate doing heroic work for his country in a remote and dangerous place could not successfully handle the intricate problems and pressing responsibilities of the war secretaryship in time of war. This judgment may have been harsh and time and fuller information may soften it. But that is our theory to explain why, from military operations in the main unprecedently successful and covering in their swift progress and extended scope a page of glory in the national annals, the secretary of war, almost alone among the central figures in that exciting period, has engaged with loss of prestige amounting almost to personal sacrifice.

It will be interesting to see how the people of Michigan will look upon Secretary Alger's candidacy for the United States senate.

The worst of the Buffalo strike is probably now over. The men have gained a point or two in the game which may be beneficial in the future, but as usual the annoyance and principal losses from the strike have been experienced by the innocent public.

Lineal Promotion in the Army.

Lieutenant Parker, one of the best known writers on military topics connected with the regular army, in last week's Outlook voices the general objection of the line to the present system of promotion in the army, which rests wholly on seniority and not at all on ability or merit. Incidentally he points out how the lack of a suitable system of promotion for merit is likely to affect our experiment of military colonial government.

After explaining the almost absolute powers of the military governor in a territory not yet brought under civil administration and showing how fortunes are made and unmade daily by a single stroke of the official pen, the lieutenant affirms that the temptation to prostitute the powers thus lodged is far greater than any that assails officers quietly stationed at home in the discharge of merely routine duties. "Under constant temptation, where simple honesty brings no reward except the assaults of disappointed enemies, the moral fiber of a man is apt to deteriorate. When wealth, reputation and success are almost sure to follow the propitiation of corrupt and powerful local influences, and when absolutely no reward except the consciousness of duty done awaits a faithful and honest administration, a military governor may," Lieutenant Parker thinks, "almost be pardoned if he yields to that ambitious desire for wealth and distinction which actuates men in every profession, and permits his administration to deviate from the strict path of rectitude to take full advantage of the numerous opportunities for personal and pecuniary aggrandizement which are constantly offered to him." The safeguard against such a collapse of virtue is to be found, the lieutenant believes, in the establishment of some method whereby satisfactory performance of dangerous, exacting or arduous duties shall find prompt and substantial recognition in the form of increased rank and pay. At present this promotion can only be temporary by means of a commission in the volunteers; the moment the volunteer army is discharged every regular army man goes back under the old seniority system where length, not merit, of service is the only open door to advancement.

Lieutenant Parker considers in detail the recommendations which have been put forward in behalf of the present system of army promotion and shows each to be fallacious. The system, he contends, does not eliminate favoritism; for while the special promotion of line officers in the line is now prohibited by law, officers with pulls find ways and means to get special commissions in the staff or peculiarly desirable assignments and in some instances the senate has sanctioned the jumping of such officers directly over the heads of far abler superiors. The element of politics and favoritism permeates promotions already, the lieutenant argues; and if that is so the only advantage of the lineal system is to cut off the hopes for promotion of meritorious officers without a pull, save by the slow process of "moving up" to fill vacancies at the head of the line.

In conclusion, Lieutenant Parker says: "Means have been found to make judicious special promotions in the navy, based on merit and distinguished service; why not also in the army? Men who by special effort and study make themselves fit for higher duties, or who win it fairly on the battlefield, should be promoted; those who dissipate their energies by frivolous pursuits should be left behind. The relative values of officers in the service are not irrevocably fixed by the dates of their commissions; honest, energetic, ambitious men should be encouraged to hope for the highest rewards. The fact is that no effort has been made by the politicians to devise such a system in the army. The present system is wrong in principle, and is destructive of professional ambition. The greatest benefits from it accrue to two classes—drones, and men with strong enough backing to make them independent of any system. Those who will most earnestly oppose a system based on merit are those who have personal interest at stake, or those who fear to be measured alongside all comers; it would be well for the service if all such were in civil life. In the reorganization of the army, which has been so much discussed in the last six months, and was so completely neglected by the last congress, no problem can be presented which will have a more important bearing on the future development of the service than that of designing a rational and sensible scheme of promotion, whereby meritorious service must be rewarded, and all other influences eliminated."

Official Paris just now is exploiting ex-Speaker Reed and marveling at his physical awkwardness and his size. The good people of Paree had better not fall into any errors concerning Mr. Reed on account of these purely external peculiarities.

An Issue to Be Welcomed.

Some information of timely interest is conveyed in the following dispatch, dated Harrisburg, appearing in yesterday's New York Sun, a paper in no way involved in Pennsylvania factional politics:

It has been decided by the opponents of the state administration to make the governor's cut of the school appropriation the chief issue in the campaign this year. Just now much is being said about the embarrassment of the various school districts this year, when, as a matter of fact, there will be no reduction of the state appropriation for the year beginning June 1. There is distinctly a misunderstanding about this matter, and the anti-Quay politicians are not losing any opportunity to spread throughout the state the impression that the shortage begins this year. The legislature of 1897 appropriated $5,500,000 for the support of the schools for the year ending the first Monday of June, 1898, and an equal sum for the year ending the first Monday of June, 1899. The appropriation for the year 1897 has been paid in full, and the appropriation for 1899 will be paid after June of this year at such times as State Treasurer Beacom may be able to meet the obligation. Deputy Superintendent Stewart insists that the school board that reduces the salaries of teachers or in any way modifies the school facilities during the next year will have absolutely no excuse. He says, on the contrary, that they should provide all the facilities possible and make such liberal provision in the way of compensation as to secure the best teaching talent. The change of the minimum school term from six to seven months will go into effect this year and will require those townships which have been imposing a nominal school tax to levy a sufficient sum to make up the difference in expense. In many cases districts have been receiving more from the state than they have raised by local taxation, but with the extension of the school term these districts will have to raise a larger local fund for the support of the schools.

If the so-called "insurgents" of Pennsylvania Republican politics want to make a campaign issue of the governor's economy vetoes and go before the people advocating the piling up of a floating state debt, it should be a welcome issue to the supporters of regular Republicanism. If they want to take the position before the voters that certain school districts should get more money from the commonwealth for school purposes than those districts themselves by local taxation raise for those purposes, let them. If they wish to defend the mistaken policy of throwing upon the state, when the state is hard up, a greater share of the cost of free schools than is assumed by the taxpayers immediately interested; and if they desire to sanction the policy of appropriating money from the state treasury when there is not sufficient revenue in sight to make possible the payment of that appropriation without recourse to a loan, all we can say is, "Go ahead." The carrying of an issue of this kind before the people for their decision would be in itself an educational step of marked value to all concerned.

Our "insurgent" friends may dislike Senator Quay as emphatically as they please and conspire against him as bitterly and as ferociously as ever they can, but when they go before the people with an arraignment of the governor of the people's election they must be prepared to sustain their accusations or themselves suffer discredit.

William Waldorf Astor admits that he was driven out of this country by the yellow newspapers who have for years held his family up to ridicule on account of their wealth. This is deplorable, but Mr. Astor should have displayed more pluck. We are loth to believe that the yawp of the sensational paper represents the sentiment of the rank and file in America. Our finish is not far distant if such is the case. The retreat of a man of Mr. Astor's position and resources before the bark of jackal journalism is indeed a sorry spectacle.

John Sherman, in an interval of garrulity, has been saying unpleasant things about his former chief, the president of the United States. Among other things he calls McKinley a trimmer, accuses him of being deficient in public ideas and public policies, and attempts to hold up to ridicule the administration's treatment of the Philippine question. In fairness to the John Sherman whom history will know it should be noted that the John Sherman who talks drivel like this is a different person.

A pneumatic street cleaning apparatus is being tested in Binghamton. This is not the kind that distributes the dust in the eyes of passing pedestrians, otherwise it might become popular in Scranton.

Aguinaldo's versatility in arranging schemes to gain time is certainly entitled to admiration.

THE LOST WORD.

The word of the wind to the aspens
I listened all day to hear;
But over the hill or down in the swale
He vanished as I drew near.

I asked of the quaking shadows,
I questioned the shy green bird;
But the falling river bore away
The secret I would have heard.

Then I turned to my forest cabin
In a clove of the Kaaterskill
And at dead of night, when the fire was low,
The whisper came to my sill.

Now I know there will haunt me ever
That word of the ancient tongue,
Whose golden meaning, half divined,
Was lost when the world was young.

I know I must seek and seek it,
Through the wide green earth and round,
Though I come in ignorance at last,
To the place of the grassy mound.

Yet it may be I shall find it,
If I keep the patience mild,
The flexible faith, the open heart,
And the calm of a little child.
—Bliss Carman in the Congregationalist.

The Argument as to Self-government

From the Outlook.

A GREAT deal of current discussion assumes that the Declaration of Independence is a declaration in favor of self-government, and that consistency requires that a republic initiated by such a statement of principles should recognize the right of self-government in all peoples. This supposed truism is applied to the solution of various political problems, and is supposed to necessitate woman suffrage, negro suffrage, Cuban suffrage, Filipino suffrage. Why it does not require child-hood suffrage in the family is not clearly stated.

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The Declaration of Indepence is not an infallible epitome of political truth, and if experience proved it erroneous in any particulars there would be no reason why the nation should not in these particulars discard it. But it so happens, as a matter of fact, that this document says nothing whatever about self-government. Only one clause, and that a parenthetical one—the phrase "deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed"—can be interpreted to imply, even remotely, any doctrine of self-government, and this implication from this phrase is by no means a necessary one. For it is quite conceivable that a people might very gladly consent to be governed by others and relieved of all responsibilities of governing. In fact, in all well ordered schools the boys consent to the government; they are not kept in subjugation through mere fear; nine-tenths of the women in the country apparently consent to be governed and have no desire to govern; and there is a not inconsiderable minority of citizens who appear very willing to relinquish into other hands all the responsibilities of government, even at the risk of incompetence or worse in the governing body.

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What the Declaration of Independence affirms is that governments exist for the benefit of the governed; and this is very different from affirming that they must always be administered by the governed. "A decent respect to the opinions of mankind," says the Declaration, "requires that they [the people] should declare the causes which impel them to the separation"; and the following is the statement of the causes: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."

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This is perfectly explicit. It declares that men have certain inalienable rights, and it does not include the right of self-government among them; that the end of government, and, by implication, the sole end of government, is to protect these rights; that when government becomes destructive of these rights it ought to be overthrown; that the people, when they have overthrown it, have a right to establish a new government in whatever form will insure public safety and happiness—being free; and, by implication, that they may choose for that purpose a military or a civil government, an autocracy, aristocracy, oligarchy, representative democracy, or pure democracy. In fact, our fathers chose as their first fom of government, not a pure democracy, but a republic in which aristocracy and representative democracy were intermingled. Negroes, Indians, and foreigners could not vote; nor native-born Americans unless they possessed some property qualification, in some of the states, or some religious qualification in others. The people were not allowed to choose their own president—he was chosen for them by a representative body; nor to make their own laws—they were made for them by another representative body. It is doubtful whether even a considerable minority would have approved the referendum or the initiative, and it is certain that practically none would have submitted judicial questions to the people at a general election or even to a mass-meeting of representative citizens, as they are submitted to the general assembly by the constitution of the Presbyterian church.

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If we turn from the document itself and the interpretation of it afforded by the practice of the fathers to the history out of which the Declaration grew, its significance is equally clear; it was historically, not a protest against government by an aristocracy or an oligarchy, but against government for the benefit of the governors. The principles of the Declaration of Independence were partly an inheritance from the French, partly from the English, and in both countries the issue was the same: Do governments exist for the benefit of the governed, or for that of the governors? In the old Roman Empire the government existed for the benefit of the ruling class, undisguisedly and avowedly so. The provinces were conquered that they might be taxed, and the taxes were not expended in the provinces for the benefit of the people who paid them; they were sent to Rome to contribute to the luxury of the imperial oligarchy centered there. This principle of government for the benefit of the governed passed over into the Latin races, and was known in the end of the last century, from the dynasty which represented it, as Bourbonism. Its most dramatic and probably worst exhibition was in France, where, under Louis XVI., the peasantry burned their fruit-trees and their furniture for fuel and fed on grass, while the king expended $20,000 a year on his stables alone. It was against this government for the benefit of the governors, this government which consigned to misery and death unnumbered thousands of the people that it might keep in corrupting idleness a few hundred of favored nobles, that the French revolted. The same system fought hard to get a lodgment in England. Overthrown in the death of Charles I., it came back in the coronation of Charles II. Overthrown in the advent of William and Mary, it bought its way back by corrupting the parliament under George III. Trevelyan describes the condition of affairs in his history of the American Revolution, and a sentence from his description may here suffice to epitomize it: "A great peer had small cause to regret that the gates of commerce were barred to him and his, as long as he could help himself out of taxes, and help himself royally." How royally and how unscrupulously he did help himself Trevelyan makes clear. That it was the object of the English bureaucracy to use the American colonies for its own enrichment, as it had used Ireland and India, history makes equally clear. That it was against this spoliation of the governed for the benefit of the governor, not for any abstract right of self-government, that the Declaration of Independence was a protest and the American Revolution a successful revolt, is made certain by the reading of the document itself, by a study of the history which preceded and gave birth to it, and by the political institutions which were founded upon it.

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There are times when self-government is palpably inconsistent with the Declaration of Independence. Self-government in the Indian Territory created a plutocracy, which is the meanest and most despicable of all forms of government. It made of the Territory a paradise for land-robbers, and a refuge for the banditti and train-wreckers who fled thither after every succeeding tragedy to escape the processes of the courts. Official reports have shown how, under self-government, spoliation, corruption, robberies, assassinations, flourished. At length, in order to protect inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, it became necessary to go into that Territory, overthrow its form of self-government, and institute a new government which would do something to secure that "safety and happiness of the people" for which, according to the Declaration of Independence, governments are instituted among men. The carpetbag governments in the south were a form of self-government; but they robbed the people, took much and gave little; and, according to the Declaration of Independence, it became "the right of the people to alter or abolish" that government, "and to institute a new government, laying its foundation in such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them seemed most likely to effect their safety and happiness." It is because the people of the north realize the lamentable failure of the first experiment that they endure with patience some grievous wrongs in the initiation of the second; but they will not be patient if in the issue it shall be clear that the new government is, like the old slaveocracy, organized for the benefit of the few and the injury of the many. In Santiago the death-rate under Spanish misrule was 700 a week; under General Wood's beneficent despotism it is reduced to forty or fifty a week. That under Cuban self-government it would have taken half a century to accomplish the sanitary reforms which General Wood has accomplished in half a year is certain; that they would ever have been accomplished is doubtful. Which right takes the precedence: the right to life of the 650 killed every week before their time, or the right of the Cubans so to administer municipal government as to kill them? There is but one answer to that question.

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It is the duty of the American people, if they wish to be true to the principles of the Declaration of Independence, to establish, wherever they have the authority, government for the benefit of the governed; so to administer that government as to secure to the people under it the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; wherever government has become destructive of these ends, to alter or abolish it; and, wherever they either frame a new government or administer it where it is already framed, to do so on such principles and in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect the "safety and happiness" of the people. Self-government is one means to this end; to be used when it will accomplish this end; not to be used when it is destructive thereof.

Case of Compulsion.

"What was your idea in naming the baby Ellen?"

"We named her Ellen for the reason principally that we couldn't name her Allen."—Chicago Tribune.